

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 08224 181450Z

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0901

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 08224

EXDIS

DEPT PASS OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, CD, BE

SUBJECT: MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CHAD

REF: A) STATE 166492, B) BRUSSELS 7597 (NOTAL)

1. WE PREDICT THAT BELGIUM WOULD WISH TO ATTEND A MULTI-LATERAL "FRIENDS OF CHAD" MEETING. THE RECENT SHABA INVASION AND THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT HERE HAS STIMULATED BELGIAN INTEREST IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA. MOREOVER, BELGIUM IS EC PRESIDENT FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS AND THE EC POLITICAL SIDE IS CURRENTLY PREOCCUPIED WITH AFRICAN ISSUES, WITNESS LAST WEEK'S MEETING OF THE NINE'S FOREIGN MINISTERS.

2. BUT A BELGIAN CONTRIBUTION TO A MULTILATERAL EFFORT TO AID CHAD IS A DIFFERENT QUESTION. BELGIUM FENDED OFF THE INITIAL REQUEST FROM VICE PRESIDENT DJIME FOR "LIGHT ARMS AND AMMUNITION" (REFTEL B) WITH A NON-COMMITTAL INTERIM REPLY INVOKING BELGIAN POLICY NOT TO DELIVER ARMS TO COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN ARMED CONFLICT. FOREIGN MINISTRY'S AFRICAN DESK OFFICER (VAN
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BRUSSELEN) TOLD US THAT MFA AFRICAN OFFICERS WILL MEET WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S CHEF DE CABINET JULY 20 TO REVIEW AFRICAN AFFAIRS. HE SAID THE CHAD SITUATION WOULD NO DOUBT COME UP AND PROMISED TO KEEP US INFORMED, INCLUDING WHAT IS THE DEFINITIVE REPLY, IF ANY, TO THE CHAD BILATERAL REQUEST FOR ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

3. COMMENT: ONE FACTOR IN BELGIUM'S RESPONSE TO THE CHADIAN APPEAL IS WHAT ONE MFA SOURCE CALLED "BELGIUM'S GOOD RELATIONS WITH LIBYA," INCLUDING VERY SUBSTANTIAL ARMS SALES TO THAT COUNTRY. BELGIUM MAY WELL DECIDE THAT IT COULD PROVIDE ARMS TO CHAD, PARTICULARLY UNDER SOME MULTILATERAL LABEL - BUT ONLY IF IT WERE CONFIDENT THIS WOULD NOT GET BELGIUM IN SERIOUS TROUBLE WITH TRIPOLI. BUSINESS IS BUSINESS. CHAMBERS

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